

ESTHER - THE QUEEN

By Mary M. Bodie

"A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband." "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her . . . Proverbs 12:4 and 31:11.

INTRODUCTION

"Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus ... in the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces being before him, when he showed the riches of his kingdom and the honor of his excellent majesty, many days, even an hundred and fourscore days ... On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of the king, to bring Vashti the queen before the king, with the crown royal, to show the people and the princes her beauty; for she was fair to look upon. But the queen refused to come at the king's command." 1:1-12.

The book of Esther contains a most marvelous unfolding of dispensational truth; a veritable mine of treasures is herein hidden. It is a most fascinating story. It is interesting from beginning to end, even if we were to limit our understanding to that of God's watch - care of His people.

The historical setting of the book is set following their release from the 70-year Babylonian captivity. The Jews who returned to their land and city had built and dedicated the temple to the service of Jehovah once again; but the wall was not yet built. (See Ezra). This book of Esther's history belongs between Ezra and Nehemiah. All the Jews did not return to Jerusalem when the way was opened. It was a small company of all those in captivity that availed themselves of the privilege and opportunity to return. A great number had settled down throughout the whole of the Persian empire and were content to remain in the place where they were no doubt successful, or at least comfortable. They were out of fellowship with the God of their fathers, and figuratively, were abiding in the world. It was of no vital interest to them that God had chosen Israel to be His special people, and that Jerusalem was the city where He would meet with them in their temple worship.

Some of the Jews did not take any stock in these things. They did not care for Jehovah, or their fatherland. Their own interests were paramount, and yet, these very ungrateful folks are the ones who are on the stage in the book of Esther. They are the people who are in the limelight, as those for whom Jehovah cares. We would have left them to the reaping of their own folly. They had settled outside of their privileges, hence, could not blame anyone but themselves if they were not protected; yet God's arm was long enough to reach them even there.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah recount Jehovah's faithful dealings with the faithful remnant of His people in the land, who humbly and gladly accepted the offer and opportunity to return to the city of promise and covenant; while the book of Esther tells altogether of Jehovah's faithful dealings with the unfaithful greater number of His people who refused to return. We need not be surprised, then, that the name of God does not appear in this book; for it is a record of a people out of fellowship with Him, and more, they preferred such a condition. Yet everywhere, we are confronted with His love and care for them. His providences were working good for them, though His face and name are hidden.

DIVISIONS OF THE BOOK

The book of Esther readily falls into seven divisions.

1. The Abasement of Vashti Chapter 1.
2. The Exaltation of Esther 2:1-23.
3. The Conspiracy of Haman 3:1-15.
4. The Intercession of Esther 4:1-7, 10.
5. The Reaping of Haman 8:1-17.
6. The Vindication of Mordecai 9:1-32.
7. The Exaltation of the Jews 10:1-3.

ABASEMENT OF VASHTI

Chapter One

"Then the king said to the wise men ... What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to the law, because she hath not performed the command of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains? And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong

to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus. For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not. . . Let there go a royal commandment from him and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, that Vashti come no more before the king Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she." 1:13-19.

As was stated, all the history of this book of Esther is typical of far greater happenings that are yet future. The history of the book of Ruth figures last day events also, but not the same ones that are figured in this book. Certain prominent end-time phases are emphasized in Ruth, while others of equal importance are marked out in Esther.

Ahasuerus ("chief") in his relationships here, is viewed as God. This is not an unusual occurrence in Scripture. There are several other instances of this. Note the case of Pharaoh in the time of Joseph (Genesis 41), and Darius the Mede in connection with Daniel (Chapter 6). This does not mean that they are as God in every respect, but only as regards sovereignty and power.

Ahasuerus, in his dealings with all the people mentioned in the book, represents God; for these are truly typical men and women upon God's stage. The setting and scenery are most realistic and scriptural, as we learn by a reading and rereading of the book in dependence upon the Illuminator, the blessed Holy Spirit.

This interesting story commences with a great feast. The king is entertaining all the princes and nobles of his provinces. Then later, he makes a feast for all the people, great and small. These banquets no doubt figure the heavenly holiday that God will order when His heavenly people are with Him. There will be such a time of feasting in the upper galleries of glory, as never was known before. God will lavishly entertain, in royal splendor, His people who will at that time be resurrected and translated. Ahasuerus manifests "the riches of His glorious kingdom and the honor of His excellent majesty." This is the time, typically, of which Jesus spoke when He said He would drink "the fruit of the vine new in the Kingdom of God." (Mark 14:25). Notice that they have the wine of the kingdom in abundance. It was served in vessels of gold, diverse one from the other, according to the state of a king. All was profusion and magnificence, with the greatest liberty; for so the king had appointed that they should do according to every man's pleasure. The perfect law of liberty was in evidence in that gathering.

Then at the end of the seventh day (the number of dispensational fullness), the king sends for the queen, Vashti, to come before them and "show her beauty, for she was fair to look upon." 1:11. In the meantime, Vashti had also made a feast for the women in the royal house, and she refused to appear at the king's behest. He sent "seven chamberlains" to bring the fair lady; but she did not obey her husband's command. She had business of her own to which she must attend. She was entertaining her friends. Why should she leave them for his friends? she must have reasoned.

All this is most divinely significant. Vashti is an old acquaintance of our own. Most of us have known her before we were acquainted with king Ahasuerus, and we thought her fair and fascinating. She captivated us. And she is living in our midst today, still charming to those who do not understand the far-reaching, demoralizing results of her refusal to obey her lord and master. For as was stated by the seven princes of Persia, "She hath not done wrong to the king only, but to all the people of the provinces of the king." Vashti has done wrong to all, is the verdict. And thus also has the Church failed in her allegiance to Christ, to be an example to wives to obey their husbands. As the Holy Spirit saith, "Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands in every thing." Ephesians 5:24. Her obedience, her subjection, her chastity was the pattern set before the world, figure of a perfect wife.

"Then the king said to the wise men . . . What shall we do unto the queen Vashti?" The decree was written and signed that Vashti could come no more before king Ahasuerus, and that her royal estate should be given unto another "better then she."

The Crime of Christendom

Vashti represents the apostatized church, the laodicean condition of Christendom - "rich and increased with goods," having need of nothing, ready to be spued out of the mouth of God. The Church, as a whole, has refused to yield to the Holy Spirit, figured by the seven chamberlains. She

Part 3:

has closed her ears to the Word of God. For the time has come, when the professed Christian, "will not endure sound doctrine." The Scripture is fulfilled - "having itching ears, they heap to themselves teachers," who tickle them with fables. This is the truth, deny it who dares. By far, the greater part of church members know nothing of the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ. The ignorance is appalling; and yet, they will not admit this fact, but are boasting in their wealth, influence, membership, etc. There is a woeful lack of the boast of Paul - "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world has been crucified unto me and I unto the world." Gal. 6:14.

The Church has refused to show the beauty put upon her by the Lord, that of being joined to Him, "flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone." She has refused to own the Headship of Christ and thus has denied His name. She has not abode in the calling wherewith she was called, espoused as a chaste virgin to one husband. Hence, God has pictured her as a harlot, a woman who has other lovers beside her husband, to whom she yields. We are shown her photograph in Revelation 17, with the judgment that awaits her false profession at the hands of the Lord Himself. The beautiful woman of mystery is going to be cut off, even as Vashti, and her place given to another, even as this type proves.

And these things are all in perfect harmony with the stern, cold facts recorded by the Apostle Paul in the book of Romans. There he announces, by the Spirit of God, that the Gentiles whom he addresses as "the wild olive tree" (11:17), will be cut off if they continue not in the goodness, or grace of God. He also admonishes them that Israel, in that case, will be grafted into their own olive tree, they being the natural branches (11:22, 23). And these marvelous dispensational purposes are divinely figured in our book, by these two beautiful women, Vashti and Esther - the one (the Gentile), cut off from favor of Ahasuerus, figures the apostatized Church, the other (the Jew), received into favor, figures Israel.

EXALTATION OF ESTHER

Chapter Two

"After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her. Then the king's servants said ... Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king ... and let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king and he did so." 2:1-4.

Esther now comes on the scene. She is one of the maidens selected to come into the presence of the king to see if she pleased him. It was as though she had been raised from the dead; for she had been orphaned and was desolate, had it not been for her cousin, Mordecai the Jew. He had adopted her in her youth as his own child, hence, he identifies himself with her, seeking her interests and her cause all the days of his life.

Mordecai furnishes us a striking type of Jesus as the Man of Nazareth. He is viewed as one with His people, the Jews - one in their suffering, rejection and persecution. And even in their rebellion, He does not cast them off entirely, as this book is plainly the proof of that. He may work secretly in their behalf, yet work, He will. It is especially toward the true and precious remnant that He manifest Himself. Hadassah ("myrtle"), is the Hebrew name of Esther. She is a most fragrant type of that blessed overcoming company. They will show their resurrection life, a green tree, amidst the dead ones of Israel. They will believe and yield to the Lord. He will be with them in a special way and they will reciprocate His affection, manifested in a loving, obedient spirit. There has always been a remnant among the natural seed of Abraham who have believed. As has been written, "Even so then at this present time, there is a remnant according to the election of grace." Rom. 11:5. Paul was one of the remnant of his time. Today there is a company among the Jews who are turning to God and accepting Christ as their Messiah. Furthermore, Israel, as the ten tribes are generally called, are hidden in the world. There may be an election from among them in preparation even now to make their entrance upon the stage as the "Star" (Esther) of the drama.

Mordecai is representative of Jesus, the Israelite, the Man; not Jesus as God. It is His humanity that is seen here. He is viewed when upon the earth, a lowly, dependent Man among His own people; one with them, cleaving to Jewish folks and Jewish hopes.

His name, Mordecai ("bitterness of my oppressed"), is butter on the bread of our interpretation. He is tasting the bitterness of the oppressions of his beloved people. He is the son of jair ("he will

enlighten"), the grandson of Shimei ("the hearing one"), and the great grandson of Kish, a Benjamite. Thus we see that his genealogy was perfect. He was a true son of Israel.

"So it came to Pass when the king's commandment and his decree was heard and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan, the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house to the custody of Hegai keeper of the women." 2:8. We read further that Hegai was very much pleased with Esther. His name ("venerable"), suggests the Holy Spirit. He speedily gave her all that she needed for her preparation to meet the eyes of the king, and he accorded her the best place in the house of the women. All these things are written for us also; for the Church is in preparation today for even a better place than that of which Esther speaks. She too, needs the sweet odors which the Holy Spirit gives to make her find favor with the King.

All the women were in preparation twelve months (this number emphasizes God's absolute rule in the heart) - "six months with oil of myrrh, six months with sweet odors." 2:9. The myrrh symbolizes suffering, which is an absolute necessity for fitness to reign with Christ. It is so at the present time; it will be so at a later period. Suffering is the price of the throne, as the Apostle Paul said, "If we suffer, we also shall reign with Him." The sweet odors symbolize the fragrance that results from the life of Christ, which is bruised. When we suffer in the will of God, suffer as a Christian and receive it all from the Father's hand, and praise Him that "all things are working good," then the sweet odors are manifest. This is all a part of our preparation to please our Bridegroom. Observe especially, that it was Hegai who gave these essentials to Esther. It is the Spirit of God that brings the grace to us (and will do the same later for the remnant); that makes us precious to Jehovah.

"And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the king's house to know how Esther did and what should become of her." 2:11. What marvelous solicitude! What interest! What deep abiding care! It exemplifies the loving care of Jesus for His dear people. There was no cessation of His love in her behalf. "In all their affliction, He was afflicted and the Angel of His presence saved them." Isa. 63:9. Mordecai is identified with Esther. Her good fortune is his, as well as her sorrows. His interest in her signifies his interest in all the Jewish people. Everything depends upon Esther gaining the favor of Ahasuerus; otherwise, they are doomed. Mordecai is assured of this fact; hence, he is apparently nervous with concern. He knows that there is, a man who is a bitter enemy of the Jews, and he stands high in favor of the king. Mordecai finds no rest until he knows the outcome of this "beauty contest."

"Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail, the uncle of Mordecai, was come that she was to go into the king, she required nothing but what Hegai, the keeper of the women appointed." 2:15. This is the first time we read of Esther's father. His name, Abihail ("father of endurance," or "shining") shows of what kind of stock she came. She came from soldier stock, the overcoming, winning life. He was also the uncle of Mordecai, hence, we are shown that Mordecai was Esther's cousin, though much older, no doubt.

The twelve months of preparation have passed. It is now Esther's turn to approach the king. We can imagine her trepidation. Each of the women were allowed to take whatever they desired in the way of adornments, and they certainly took advantage of the opportunity. But Esther, wise lady, desired nothing but what Hegai advised her to take. She left her cause absolutely with him, and this was why she pleased the king. This chamberlain knew just what would please him, and he coached Esther in every detail.

What a lesson is here for us, who desire our King's favor! Let us trust our Keeper, the Holy Spirit, who has come to take charge of us and fit us for the presence of Jehovah. Hegai succeeded beautifully in the case of Esther. She obtained favor of all who looked upon her. They all knew she would be the choice. And so it came to pass, when the king saw this beautiful woman, that he chose her.

"The king loved Esther above all the women and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins. So he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti." 2:17. There was another great feast announced by the king. He invited all the princes and nobles of his kingdom to Esther's feast. He desired all the people to see the beauty of Esther, the "Star" of Persia, as she was called. She was glad to yield to her lord. In this she was a contrast to Vashti who refused to yield to her husband's wishes. She was abased, while Esther was exalted to her place on the throne of empires.

In this are some deep, pregnant lessons for the Church of Jesus Christ, and for us as individuals.

"Obedience is better than sacrifice; and to hearken than the fat of rams." I Sam. 15:22. Exaltation is the reward of obedience; abasement is the result of disobedience. Saul lost his throne because he did not listen to the Word of Jehovah, as did Vashti. The lesson is plain to those whose eyes are opened. If we desire to reign with Christ, we must qualify now by obedience to the Word of God.

It would seem that Mordecai was also advanced to a place of trust; for in the next verse we learn that "when the virgins were gathered the second time, Mordecai sat in the king's gate. 2:19. He became one of the judges of the city, and the next verse informs us that it was not because of his relationship to Esther. She had not yet showed her kindred, for so Mordecai had charged her. 2:20. She still obeyed her uncle, as she did when she was brought up with him.

In the closing verses of this chapter, the record of an event becomes of grave importance later. In those days while Mordecai sat in the gate, discharging his duties, two of the king's chamberlains, "Bigthan and Teresh, which kept the door were wroth and sought to lay hands on the king. And the thing was known to Mordecai who told it unto Esther the queen." 2:22. When the plot was made known, the two traitors were hanged on a tree; and it was written in the book of the chronicles of the king." 2:23. Mordecai became the means by which a plot against the life of the king was made known and thwarted. Mordecai's part in the matter was forgotten; but God remembered. He makes sure that this overlooked service was one day rewarded. In a dark hour on a sleepless night, Ahasuerus calls for the records and the forgotten service is brought to his attention. We shall see the result of the matter later. It comes at a very opportune time. God is over all.

CONSPIRACY OF HAMAN

Chapter Three

"After these things, did king Ahasuerus promote Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes that were with him." 3:1.

At this juncture another actor, Haman, steps out upon the stage. He is a very important personage and plays a large role in this true drama. He has left an indelible impression upon some folks. His memory is held in abhorrence, to this day, among orthodox Jews. They spit and curse when he is mentioned. They call him, "the Jew's enemy."

It will be profitable for a better understanding of his career, to consider briefly his genealogy. His grandfather was of the line of Agag, the name given to the kings of Amalek, the people against whom the Lord has indignation forever. Haman is thus a royal Amalekite. He is the last of that princely line; for with his death, and that of his two sons, the name of Amalek was blotted out from under heaven. This was according to the Word of the Lord. (Exodus 17:14).

The reason for Jehovah's antipathy against Amalek is of a two-fold character. The first is because of the typical place of the Amalekites. They represent the flesh, or rather that which springs from the flesh - fleshly lusts. Amalek was grandson to Esau, as the first Scripture relative to them, indicates: "And Timna was concubine to Eliphaz, Esau's son, and she bare to Eliphaz, Amalek." (Genesis 36:12).

Esau, who is also called Edom, invariably figures the flesh. Before his birth, he and his twin brother, Jacob, struggled for supremacy in the womb of Rebekah. This figures the warfare between the two creations, flesh and spirit. The one, the flesh, is opposed to the other, the Spirit, in every particular. Esau is the first-born; but Jacob, the supplanter, was right on his heels. Adam was the first, in point of time upon the scene, but not in importance, nor as regards the purpose of God. "That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual." (I Corinthians 15:46).

The fact is emphasized again and again in Scripture, that the firstborn is set aside to make room for the second, or another, as the case may be; for the "second" is typical of the Last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. For instance: Cain was superceded by Seth, apparently a resurrection of Abel who was killed. Ishmael was cast out to make room for Isaac, the promised seed of Abraham. Manasseh, the firstborn of Joseph, gives way to Ephraim, and Joseph took precedence over Reuben, the firstborn of Jacob. All of these proclaim the final exaltation of the spiritual man. Hence, we may readily understand Jehovah's aversion to Amalek; for he sprang from the line of Esau, type of the first man, the fallen Adam.

The second reason of the Lord's aggressive attitude of ill-will against Amalek is the fact that his people were the first to come out against Israel when they were on their journey out of Egypt. At that time they were defeated; for Israel had just been refreshed with water from the Rock -

Exodus 17:8. But ever afterward, they proved themselves the enemy of the people of the Lord, as many of the Scripture citations prove. Notice the record in Numbers 14, when Israel disobeyed the Lord and presumed to go up unto the hill top to meet their foes: "Then the Amalekites came down ... and discomfited them even unto Hormah." 14:44, 45.

Balaam, as the mouthpiece of Jehovah, foretells their ultimate defeat with no uncertain sound: "When he looked on Amalek, he took up this parable and said, Amalek was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall be that he perish forever." Numbers 24:20. Moses also in his last charge to his beloved people, said, "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way when ye were come forth out of Egypt, how he met thee and smote the hindermost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; AND HE FEARED NOT GOD." Deut. 25:17.

How wonderfully suggestive is the above Scripture when seen in its spiritual aspect. "The feeble, faint and weary," were the ones that Amalek destroyed. Those that were not keeping up with the pace set by the leaders were overtaken by the enemy. Here is truly much food for reflection. When saints run fast, Amalek cannot overcome them. It is the spiritually indolent, the slackers, the indifferent, that fall prey to the lusts of the flesh. And we might say, that the way to run fast in this spiritual race, is to get the victory over the flesh at the onset.

Jehovah did not forget the unfair advantage Amalek took of His people, neither did He ignore the attitude of hatred constantly manifested toward them. Hence, we read, "It shall be that when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thy enemies round about . . . that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." Deut. 25:19. God is against them for Israel's sake. Many years after those words to Moses, when Saul was king, the Lord commissioned him, by the mouth of Samuel, "Go, smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not." I Samuel 15.

King Saul did not obey all the word of the Lord. He utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword; but he spared Agag, the king, and others of the seed royal. And the fact of Haman's existence testifies to Saul's disobedience. If he had truly obeyed the voice of Jehovah, Haman would never have made his entrance upon the scene. Saul's reprieve of Agag and his family made possible the plot of the Jew's enemy, and exposed the nation of destiny to destruction. How Satan would have rejoiced if he could have turned the tables on the Lord and blotted out Israel!

Saul spared Agag, representative of the higher form of the flesh. Samuel who was noble, and a worthy of faith, discerned that Agag was just as depraved as the lowest of his line, and he had no mercy upon him, nor upon his progeny. Yet, there must have been one of his sons that escaped at that time, for six hundred years later, Haman, a royal Amalekite of the house of Agag, and Mordecai a descendant of the house of Kish, Saul's house, confronted one another again. Is that not a strange coincidence? And yet, looked at spiritually, it is not strange. If we do not get the ascendancy over the flesh-life, it will destroy us. If we refuse to use the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, against its every manifestation, even the nice, refined, esthetic desires, which few imagine God abominates, it will finally slay us, as witness Saul's death. (II Samuel 1:8). Later on, we may find a resurrection of this enemy of the spiritual man, who will give us much trouble.

Haman's Exaltation

"Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall," is a proverb that certainly applies to the villain of this story. Haman becomes the court favorite after Ahasuerus exalts him to great honor. All the courtiers, save one, vie with each other in doing him honor. We read, "Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence." 3:2. Thereby, the plot begins to thicken.

In the first chapter we learned that Mordecai was Esther's cousin, although much older. He had brought her up from childhood, and was deeply interested in her welfare, as well as her exalted position. His family had been carried away from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon - 3:6. He was of royal birth, being of the house of Kish; therefore, Esther also was in that royal line. Mordecai had no doubt learned in his many years, to be wise as a serpent and as harmless as a dove. He did not let it be known that he was related to Esther; and neither was her family or kindred known. He had charged her to keep the matter a secret and she obeyed his wish. The knowledge of her relationship to this elderly man might have prejudiced her cause and jeopardised her chances to be the king's bride. Some may criticize the fact that she, a Jewess, married a Gentile, in disobedience to the expressed edict of Jehovah against such a union; but we must remember that she was, as it were, outside the place where the covenant of law

obtained.

With the carrying away of the Jews, the Mosaic ordinances were considered null and void. The people had repeatedly proven themselves unable to keep their part of the covenant, hence, Jehovah cast them out of the land. He thus emphasized the fact that He was under no obligation to keep His part; for the covenant of Sinai was conditional upon their obedience. Therefore, Esther was free from the restrictions of Moses, even at that very time; and furthermore, she was a typical character. God can do what He wills with His own, at any time. His will and purposes were being carried out at that time in all these events on the stage at Ahasuerus's court. How wonderful and magical are these apparently prosaic events, when viewed through the lens of the Holy Spirit's telescope!

Mordecai waited for the right time, when Esther was safely and securely entrenched in the good graces of the king of the Persian empire as his adored and reigning queen. He began to take a more pronounced stand for the rights of the Jew. He refused to bow to Haman, and he seemed to be the only one who dared to show such rebellion. He no longer hid himself, but stepped out boldly upon the scene. He let the fact be known that he was a Jew; and as such, he could not bow to that enemy of his people. The Lord had indignation against Amalek, so also had Mordecai. By his actions, he took sides with Jehovah, and his typical character becomes more manifest.

The king's servants enquired, Why had he transgressed the king's commandment by refusing to acknowledge the authority of Haman? They knew it was a foolhardy thing to do, and imagined Mordecai to be stubborn and envious. Why not bow to Haman? That was not much to do. He did not yield to their counsel or persuasions; hence, they were offended and told Haman of his refusal to show him honor. We read that they desired "to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand; for he had told them that he was a Jew. 3:4.

The servants were curious to know what attitude Haman would take toward this rebel. They were anxious to see if he could get by with his audacious refusal to bow to the king's favorite. They also found out that this was no ordinary personal feud. They were heads of opposing principles; types of two creations, representative of clashing elements that can never mix, nor have any fellowship whatever. The one, Mordecai, represents Christ and the new creation; the other, Haman, figures the anti-Christ and the old creation. The one stands for God and all His ways and will; the other, for the devil and all his ways and will.

When Haman became aware of the affront directed toward him by that "little old man" who sat in the king's gate, his ire was aroused. He was "full of wrath." He determined to have revenge on the impudent Jew who dared to slight him. He did not want to lay hands on Mordecai alone, his vengeful strategic mind sensed a greater vengeance upon his enemies. He would destroy all the Jews that were scattered throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus. 3:5, 6. Cannot you see the crafty old serpent in Haman's purpose? Jehovah had spoken in no uncertain tone concerning the blotting out of Amalek; so here, Satan is pronouncing doom upon the Jews. But, God is sovereign. The destiny of mankind is in His hand, and His Word regarding nations and people, shall stand regardless of Satan, or man's plans.

No doubt Mordecai's companions were satisfied. They saw how matters were going with this obstinate Jew, and perhaps, some even blamed him, as folks are wont to do at such times. They may have felt that he brought his troubles upon himself. Why should he have such strong convictions upon the subject? Why not let well enough alone? "When in Rome do as the Romans do," or in this case, it was Persia. This is the way men reason today. Whatever they said to Mordecai, it did not change his principles or actions. He was not that kind of man. To all who spoke to him, he would answer, "It is my place to obey God and honor His Word."

This is the only attitude the man of God can take. It is this spirit that sustained him in every age and time. It is the Spirit of Christ. Those who have this spirit are always deemed foolish, fanatical, impractical, nutty, and many other mirth-provoking names. What do they care, as long as God is honored and pleased?

Haman's colossal scheme for the annihilation of the Jewish race, can easily be traced to its source, the devil. The boastful son of Hammedatha was but the tool of the enemy, Satan. The terrible foe of God and man knew that it had been written that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, and that it was from the house of David, the tribe of Judah, that the mighty Conqueror should arise; hence, his determination to destroy the Jewish race. He would sacrifice the entire nation to prevent the coming of the promised Redeemer. The history of Israel

witnesses again and again to the fact of Satan's desire to exterminate this chosen people.

The Plot Unfolding

"In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar." 3:7. Haman was superstitious, even as many a tyrant before and since his day. He was a believer in lucky and unlucky days; so he coed for the casting of lot, called in the Hebrew language, Pur. It was for the purpose of determining a certain propitious day for the putting into effect his plans. Finally, the lot fell upon the month Adar, and Haman entered the king's presence.

Haman pretended concern for the empire and said, "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them." 3:8. Then in an apparent burst of magnanimity, he offered to pay ten thousand talents of silver to rid the king of such objectionable subjects. Ahasuerus did not even enquire the name of the race that was to be ruthlessly exterminated from his kingdom. He "took his ring from his hand and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite; the Jews' enemy . . . The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee." 3:10, 11.

Haman lost no time after the authority was given to him. He immediately summoned the king's scribes and issued a proclamation, sealed with the king's ring, to be sent by post to all the provinces of the Persian Empire, to destroy all Jews both young and old in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar and to take the spoil of the people. 3:13. The entire nation was devoted to death under the unalterable law of the Medes and Persians which would allow of no reversal. It was the same unalterable principle which settled the fate of Vashti and gave Esther her place. We can realize the danger facing the Jew. Then the king and Haman sat down to drink, as though in total unconcern as to the fact that a whole nation had been given over to be massacred; but we read, "the city Shushan was perplexed." 3:15.

Amidst my list of blessings infinite
Stands this the foremost, that my heart has bled,
For all I bless Thee, most for the severe.
Hugh Macmillan

Mordecai's Mourning
Chapter Four

"When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry." 4:1.

Mordecai was in anguish of spirit, greatly distressed and could not disguise his grief. He realized the significance of that devilish decree, not only to his people, but to God. His promise regarding them would not find fulfillment if they were cut off. Haman and the king might look lightly upon the slaughter of a nation, but to the people involved, it was a solemn matter and the cause of general mourning. The word from King Ahasuerus was certain and the proclamation was ratified by the royal ring. They realized that they were under sentence of death, the decree already delivered. Is that not a striking figure, not only of the Jews, but of all men as they stand before God? They are under a greater condemnation than that which fell upon every Jew in the province of Ahasuerus; for the king's decree was but a physical judgment, while that of all mankind is eternal.

How indifferent and callous men are respecting the judgment of God! God's judgment is just. We must all admit, as the dying thief on the cross, that we have come into the place of death "justly." Death "passed upon all men, because all have sinned," and yet there seems to be so little concern about this fact. Even believers who have passed out of condemnation because of their faith in Jesus, do not seem exercised in heart regarding others who are still in danger. We bear very little crying with aloud voice before the King's gate in their behalf. Very few are dressed in sackcloth, covered with ashes, making intercession for poor sinners who are blinded by the devil. Let us not be ashamed of such grief!

Mordecai, the Jew, figures Jesus, the Man of Nazareth. He is viewed here as identified with His people Israel as one with them in all their joys and sorrows. The very same Jesus replied to Saul's question, "Who art thou Lord?" with "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Saul had not been persecuting the Lord Jesus personally. It was His people who were afflicted, but He is one

with them in every situation and in every age. He changes not. He still cries with a "loud and bitter cry," when they are made to suffer. When their raiment is sackcloth, He too, is clothed in like manner.

"So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai and to take away his sackcloth from him; but he received it not." 4:4. What is the teaching here? for "those things happened unto them for types." God would have us understand their message. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honor of kings to search out a matter." Proverbs 22:2.

Esther figures the remnant of Jews who are the firstfruits of the national harvest. Esther is in fullest sympathy with Mordecai, figurative of Jesus identified with His suffering people. She does not seem to know of the decree of Ahasuerus, nor of the distress into which it has plunged the Jews; neither does she appear to realize that she is a partaker with them in any measure. This is all significant. She may represent a company of people that will not know of their identity with the nation of Israel. It could be that the 144,000, the wonderful company of Revelation seven and 14, are figured by this beautiful character, Esther. The 144,000 are guarded and protected by the Lord; for even the judgments are not allowed to fall upon the earth at that time until they are sealed. Rev. 7:3. They are a special treasure, and like Esther, will be in ignorance as to their national character; yet, in the Spirit, they will understand the need and enter into the place of intercession to which they are called. Observe that it is Mordecai's insistence, fiery zeal and mourning that moves Esther. She does not appear very concerned even after she learns of the edict of her lord and king, until Mordecai stirs up her pure mind by way of remembrance.

When Esther heard of Mordecai's grief and abasement at the gate, she sent raiment to clothe him and take away his sackcloth. But no, the little Jew will not allow her to get rid of her responsibility toward their people that easily. A few clothes amount to nothing in the case of the queen of the Persian Empire. This matter goes very deeply. Some Christians today are like Esther in this regard. They would do some good, clothe the poor, hide the poverty and grief from their eyes with a gift of money; send food and raiment to those in distress and thus ease their conscience before God; but the spiritual matters they leave to their minister. He is "hired" for this purpose, they insist. It is none of their business to enquire into these deeper things. They want to get away from the fact of their responsibility toward their neighbor. They desire to ignore their identity with mankind, especially if they have risen in the world as did Esther.

Mordecai will not let the lady of the king's household shirk her responsibility by sending some clothes to him, and neither will our Kinsman--Redeemer. No charitable gifts can take the place of spiritual help which people need. Paul cried: "I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and the unwise." Romans 1:14. All saints are called to this ministry of love. We should be delighted to serve those who are appointed to death as we once were. Hence, Esther must rise to the occasion, which she finally does, when she realizes the seriousness of the situation.

She sends a messenger to Mordecai to learn the cause of his strange behavior. Hatach, the special chamberlain whom the king had delegated to wait upon Esther, is the means of communication between herself and Mordecai. This is precious typical teaching here. Hatach means "a gift." He represents the Holy Spirit, the Gift of the Father to His children, the power of our communion and fellowship with Jesus. Hatach goes to Mordecai and searches out the situation in all its details and then comes and repeats it to Esther. He makes her know that her people are in great sorrow because of threatened circumstances, though she is fortunately far separated from them. She is urged by Mordecai to use her influence with the king in their behalf. He charges her to speedily respond to their need, and adds, "Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house more than all the Jews."

Mordecai reminds Esther of her lineage, that she too, was one of this hated race that Haman was determined to exterminate. He warns her of her own danger; and Esther is awakened. She realizes the need of her people, and also that she was the only one in a position to help them, though as Mordecai declared to her, "if thou altogether boldest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed; and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" 4:13, 14.

He is assured that the Jews shall be delivered, yet he does not cease his efforts in their behalf. This is faith. We know some things are sure to come to pass, but we continue our prayers until

we have the answer. It is our blessed privilege to be co-workers with God in His already revealed purposes for this world. Esther is a beautiful type of a company of people in close proximity to the throne. She does all in her power to defeat Satan, whose cruel enmity is especially aroused against the Jews, at the time which this book figures.

Esther is in a quandry; for though she is the queen of the Persian dynasty, nevertheless, she is subject to its iron-clad laws of etiquette. Genuinely distressed, but apparently helpless, she sends an answer to Mordecai: "All the king's servants and the people do know that whosoever shall come unto the king into the inner court who is not called, there is one law to put him to death except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre that he may live; but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days." 4:11.

It had not dawned upon Esther that the king's proclamation included herself; for so the decree was - "all Jews ... both men and women." She had hid her nationality so perfectly that Haman had not the slightest idea that she was included in his bloody edict. She accordingly hesitated risking her life by entering her lord's presence uninvited; but now Mordecai assures her that she will lose her life anyway. She is of the hated race, and will not escape. He counsels her to do all that lays within her power and encourages her by saying that deliverance for the Jew must come, and she has been raised up for this very purpose.

Mordecai's vehement message, full of the Holy Ghost and fire, has the desired effect. Esther rises to the occasion. With the sentence of death in herself, she sent the following reply to her aged cousin - "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish." 4:15.

Although the name of God is not mentioned here, it appears that Esther had her confidence in Him; otherwise, why the summons to fast in the city and in the palace? And when its typical setting is clearly noted, we see the reason why the name of Deity is hidden. "So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther had commanded him." 4:17 The sequel shows how deeply he is concerned for the Jews. ! His figurative place also is plainly discernable. Christ's love for His people is marvelously depicted in the unselfish, yearning, zealous, loyal heart of this man who sat in the king's gate. He was apparently of little consequence whatever, and yet we see he has a most important part in the drama played in the book of Esther. In fact if it had not been for Mordecai, there would have been no Jewish maiden to find grace in the eyes of Ahasuerus. The entire story in the book depends upon the man who dared to refuse to bow his knee to any of the house of Amalek, even though they were of the royal line of Agag, and a king's favorite besides. We would pause here to explain. It may appear difficult for some to reconcile the typical teaching. The fact that Ahasuerus, type of God, should promote Haman, the Jews' enemy and figure of the anti-Christ, is enough to stagger our understanding. We must look upon it in the light of - "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." (Acts 15:18). He is over all. The anti-Christ cannot appear upon the earth, except in the will of God; hence, it will be as though He were his friend. Furthermore, he will claim the honor of being associated with God and acting for Him, and the world will view him in that guise. It will seem as though he is the favorite of God; for he will manifest such wisdom, power and personality, that all men will "wonder after the beast." Few will realize his satanic origin and character. God will permit men to be deceived. Yea, it is written: "He shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie because they have received not the love of the truth." (II Thessalonians 2:10, 11).

LEAD THOU THE WAY

Each time I speak let what I say
Be of Thy Word,
That those who listen shall be blessed
For having heard.
Of what I do let every move
Be first a prayer,
That in my touch of other hearts
I shall not err.
And when I walk my feet shall take
Thy Chosen Way,
That those who hold my hand shall not

Be led astray!
- Esther Nilsson

ESTHER FINDS GRACE

Chapter Five

"Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house. And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre." 5:1, 2.

The days of fasting over, the queen ventures into the presence of the king. She was dressed in her royal robes, as though she had a right into the presence of her lord and was making no apology for it. Nevertheless, she is taking a chance and practically forfeiting her life to save her people. If he shows her grace, all is well. She and all her people will be the witness of his mercy. If not, she can but die, as she will anyway if that decree of Haman takes effect. She is prepared for all that comes. The die is cast; there is no retreat for Esther. It is either grace, or death. That is the same predicament in which we all were. According to law, we would perish if we dared to enter the presence of a holy God. The law forbade such a thing, but there is grace upon the throne; and we can venture to approach.

All is well with Esther. Her youth and beauty, as well as her gentle, trustful mien, won the heart of Ahasuerus. He admired her for her daring. He saw that she had confidence in his love and it called forth his favor. He held out the sceptre and lo, she is safe. God was in it all. We recognize His mighty overruling power in all this typical happening. It is the sign that grace is reigning. Because of atone- ment, God can now extend the token of His favor to those who stand in the place of death. He can hear and answer prayer because of Calvary, though it was future at the time of Esther.

The golden sceptre is divinely significant. It teaches us, in type, that there must be a Mediator between God and man. God must have a golden sceptre in His hand, and by touching, we are shown His favor. Esther, as well as we, must "kiss the Son lest He be angry and we perish by the way." (Psalm 2:12). "For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12).

The company of believers which Esther figures, are a very choice people. They are shown marvels of God's love and favor. They are mightily used in intercession as we are informed here in type. They are a means of blessing to the whole house of Israel. Why are they of such great service? There is a cause even besides that of God's sovereign choice. They yield themselves to this choice, even as Esther yielded herself to Mordecai's planning and purpose for her. She too, might have decided that she did not want him to have his way with her. She might have even refused to yield to his desires that she should endeavor to please the king, and thus she would have frustrated all Mordecai's purposes for the good of their people. We little comprehend the far-reaching influence of the completely Surrendered life. Eternity alone will reveal the extent of its power. Ahasuerus knew that only some special need, or unusual desire had brought his beautiful wife unannounced and uninvited into his presence. He asks, "What wilt thou, queen Esther? What is thy request? It shall be given thee to the half of my kingdom." 5:3. Here is grace upon grace. What a promise! It is marvelous! It is as if a signed blank check had been handed her in which she might write all she desired. And that is exactly what we have in the precious assurances given in Scripture. "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Phil. 4:19. Also: "He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask, or think." Ephesians 3:20.

The God of all grace is not enriched by withholding His riches, nor impoverished by pouring out His blessings. He says to each trusting soul, "Ask what thou wilt," even as Ahasuerus said to Esther. Many of the Lord's people will say, "Amen," to this; yet at the same time deny that these promises include the healing of the body, or the gift of the Holy Spirit, as on the day of Pentecost. "Oh, fools and slow of heart to believe" cannot be said of Esther. She takes advantage of his offer of grace.

"And Esther answered, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him." 5:4. At first sight, it may seem as though she asks but

a very small thing compared with the almost unlimited opportunity accorded her. But she is wise, and realizes that she has a most important matter at stake. She cannot afford to make one false move. She must go slowly; for she is dealing with matters of state and government, not of the heart, nor the home. Notice also that Haman is also asked to attend, or rather, the king is requested to bring him. The invitation is to the king. He immediately accepts and commands the presence of Haman to the banquet. She had acted her faith and made her preparation beforehand.

Behold the favor in which she stands. The king makes all things serve her; even her enemy must come at her request and acknowledge her rights. Haman is elated over the invitation. He is not aware that she is of this hated Jewish race. Her identity seems to be hidden. This fact is a wonderful proof that she is the type of a company of believers, gathered out from the ten tribes. No one except the Lord is aware of Israel's abiding place. They are swallowed up among the nations. No doubt, many of them are among us today. Hosea, the prophet, who is exclusively occupied with "Ephraim," standing for the ten tribes, in contrast with "Judah" standing for the two tribes, says, "After two days will He revive us and in the third day He will raise us up and we shall live in His sight." Hosea 6:3. We are informed further that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." II Peter 3:8.

These two Scriptures, taken in connection with each other, prove that the second day of Ephraim's exile, the day of reviving, is past, and the third day of his raising up, is here. The ten tribes were scattered 720 B.C. Now if this is the correct interpretation, as we truly believe, the Lord has been dealing with Israel for the past two thousand years at least, but as hidden among the Gentiles. All things which are written in the law and prophets, concerning them, will shortly come to pass.

"Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared." 5:5. In the house of feasting when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he again affirms his promise to his beloved queen. "What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed." 5:6. The king sensed the fact that the invitation to the banquet was but a prelude to the great desire of her heart. He is sure that she would not have dared to come unto him without some great concern, some deep need. He encourages her again with his mighty offer of grace, to the half of the kingdom, the only limit. However, she only asks that he and Haman come to attend another banquet which she shall prepare for them the following day.

When Haman learns of this he is intoxicated with his own worth. He goes forth "joyful and with a glad heart," until he spies Mordecai, the sackcloth-covered Jew, who does not rise up, nor honor him in any manner. He is full of indignation, but he refrains himself as he feels so sure that his day of vengeance is almost come. When he arrives home, he tells his wife and friends of his good fortune. He is especially triumphant in the fact that he alone was invited with the king, to Esther's banquet.

What a disgusting exhibition of vanity and pride Haman presents here. "Honor is not seemly for a fool." He is mad with exultation. He gloats over the fact that no one but himself was invited to Esther's banquet of wine. Yet he cannot conceal his wounded vanity in connection with the Jew at the gate, who refuses to honor him. 5:12, 13.

We would infer from the typical teaching here, that the "man of sin," whom Haman figures, will apparently be on good terms with those who are figured by Esther. These people will disguise their real feelings toward him until they have had the assurance from God. They, as Esther, will be divinely endued with wisdom for their day.

Haman is so encouraged by his apparent triumph that he decides to rid himself of Mordecai immediately. According to the counsel of his friends, and especially Zeresh his wife, he has a gallows made, on which to hang the man he hates. Zeresh meaning "gold," no doubt figures the harlot whose photograph is seen in Revelation 17, sitting upon the beast, figuring the empire of which the anti-Christ is the head. She is seen there as influencing and controlling affairs of state. The advice of his wife and friends pleases Haman immensely. Why should he wait for the destruction of Mordecai with the whole company of Jews? He can trump up some charge against him and dispatch the insolent Jew immediately; for he surely will never be happy or secure while that little man remains at the king's gate.

This is so wonderfully significant as relating to Christ and anti-Christ. The latter will hate the One

whose place and office he will usurp for a short time. He will know down in his heart that the throne on which he will sit, the honors that he bears and the diadems he wears, belong to Another; and that very knowledge will fill him with rage. We have these marvelous future events foreshadowed in the actions of these two men toward one another. The false Christ will be just as desperate and determined .

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